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A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the
D E A T H
O F

Mrs. MARTHA CLARKE,

Who departed this Life *January*
the 14th, 1730.

Preached at
DEVONSHIRE SQUARE,
JANUARY 25.

*And published at the REQUEST of several
who heard it.*

By SAYER RUDD.

K

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SERMON

Occasioned by the

DEATH

OF

Mrs. MARY CLARK

Who departed this life January 21st 1791.

By JOHN WATSON, M.A.



By JAMES KIDD, Printer.

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2 THESS. ii. 16, 17.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace, comfort your Hearts, and stablish you in every good Word and Work.

THE melancholy Occasion which has called me to discourse from the Words read at this Time, is, I perswade my self, well known to most of you. It has pleased the Lord, from whom our Life came, and in whose Hand our Breath is, to remove by Death a very honourable and useful Member of this Community. A Providence which is the more awful in it self, and ought to be the more affecting to us, as the Lord seems to be calling Home those, who have been his faithful Servants and Followers for Years past, and to be denying his Churches a Succession, or Rise of others, to fill up their Places.

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As to the fixing on this Portion of Scripture, rather than any other, for the present Service, it was done at the Choice, and by the Appointment of our deceased Friend; who left it as her Request, that in case any thing of this Nature should be attempted, it might be from these Words. Her Reason for it was, as she her self signified, because they had been often sweet and refreshing to her own Soul; and, as I may safely venture to add, because she entertain'd Hope, that the Instructions contained in them, when particularly considered and opened in public, might likewise, through the divine Blessing, be of Service to others, who either stately attended the Worship of God in this Place, or might be providentially brought here upon that Occasion. Such was her Affection for this Society in particular, such her Desire to promote the Edification and Comfort of Souls in general. Upon this Account she acted, no doubt, with the same Views towards us, as the Apostle did towards the *Corinthians*^a; namely, that she might be a Means of comforting others with the Comfort, wherewith she her self had been comforted of God.

The Words themselves are an affectionate Prayer of the Apostle for the Saints at *Thessalonica*; the Occasion and Dependence of them may be gather'd from the Verse preceding

^a 2 Cor. i. 4.

the Text, where we have these Expressions: *Therefore, Brethren, stand fast, and hold the Traditions which ye have been taught, whether by Word, or our Epistle* ^a. Here the Apostle earnestly exhorts the believing *Thessalonians* to stand fast in their Profession of the Doctrines, and in the Practice of the Discipline and Duties of the Gospel; for this is what he means by *the Traditions which they had been taught* ^b. These, whether delivered to them by Word of Mouth, or in Writing, from the Apostle, contained the whole Faith and Practice of the Gospel Church; all that was to be believed, and done by the Disciples and Followers of Christ. Thus much must be suppos'd included in the Traditions here spoken of; because otherwise the Rule, which Christ has left his Church under the New Testament, would be less perfect, than that which the *Jewish* Church had under the Old; whereas there is the highest Reason to conclude, that if *Moses* was faithful as a Servant, much more *Christ* as a Son. Now the Apostle exhorts the *Thessalonians* to *hold fast* all these Traditions; and by them all the Churches and Followers of Christ; that is to say, not to revolt, or depart from them in any Particular. And why so? Because he was thoroughly sensible of the great Importance of this Duty; how much depended upon it, both with respect to God

^a 2 Thess. ii. 15.

^b Vid. Poli Synopf. Crit. in loc.

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and themselves. He knew that the Glory of God, and the Comfort of their own Souls, were nearly concerned in their Steadiness and firm Adherence to the Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel : and therefore, as one who had both at Heart, he, in the first Place, presses this Duty strongly upon them; and then, considering how weak they were in themselves, and how liable upon many Accounts to fall short in the discharge of it, he backs his Exhortation with an affectionate Prayer. Hence, if you observe, the Apostle puts the same Things into this Prayer for the *Thessalonians*, which he had before inserted in his Exhortation, only he expresses himself in different Words, and adds in his Request, *Comfort your Hearts: That which Paul terms to stand fast, and hold the Traditions they had been taught*, in the 15 Verse ; he here calls a being *stablished in every good Word and Work*. And where the People of God are brought to this, where they obtain Grace to abide in the Profession of every Doctrine, and in the Practice of every Duty, which the Lord has delivered to his Gospel Church, Peace of Conscience, and *Comfort of Heart*, will necessarily follow, as the genuin Fruits of such Steadiness and Integrity. We see then, what was the Occasion of these Words, and after what manner the Apostle introduces them. He first earnestly exhorts the *Thessalonians* to continue

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tinue stedfast in the Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel; and then affectionately prays, that God would strengthen them accordingly: *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, &c.*

In these Words the following Parts are observable.

First, The Objects of the Apostle's Prayer, or the Persons he prays to.

Secondly, The Motives which gave him, and which will always give the People of God Encouragement to pray to them. And

Lastly, The Matter of the Prayer, or the Things which he prays for.

As to the Person who put up this Prayer, and the Persons for whom it was put up, we have already observed, that this Address to the Throne of Grace was made by *Paul*, one well known to the Churches in that Day, as a remarkable Instance of distinguishing Grace; an eminent Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the famous Apostle of the *Gentiles*; as one, who was not before his Conversion so great an Admirer of *Moses*, and so strongly attached to the Ceremonies of the Law; but he was afterwards as great an Admirer of *Christ*, and as zealously concerned for his Word and Ordinances. And with Respect to the Persons for whom he prays, they, as we likewise intimated before, were the Saints at *Thessalonica*, which was a chief City of *Macedonia*, whither the Apostle

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postle had been directed by Vision to carry the Gospel ^a, and where he had laid the Foundation of a considerable Church, before his preaching either at *Rome* or *Corinth*; as we learn by the *Acts* of the Apostles. But we pass this, designing only to insist on the Three Things before mentioned; namely, The Objects of this Prayer, the Encouragement to it, and the Matter contained in it. We begin therefore,

First, With the Objects of this Prayer.

And they are, the *Lord Jesus Christ* and *God the Father*, not exclusive of the holy Spirit, tho' he be not here expressly mention'd. The Holy Ghost is not to be excluded, because, tho' the Persons in the Godhead are distinct from one another, and ought therefore to be distinguished; yet the Godhead it self, or the Divine Essence, is undivided and common to them all. For this Reason, whether the several Persons are particularly mentioned or not, they are always included in every Act of religious Worship; because the one God, in the three divine Persons, is the alone Object of such Worship. However, he is not here mentioned, probably because, he acts by way of Office from the Father and the Son, in the things, which the Apostle prays for, according to the Order agreed upon between the blessed Three in the Affair of Man's Salvation.

^a Acts xvi. 9.

Hence

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Hence he is said to be *given* and *sent* by the Father, *John* xiv. 16, and 26. And the Son promises to *send him*, *Chap.* xvi. 7. Which is to be understood with Reference to the everlasting Counsel or Covenant, in which the Holy Ghost voluntarily agreed (to speak after the manner of Men) among other Things; to be the Guide and Comforter of the Elect, to lead them into the Knowledge and Practice of all necessary Truth, and establish them in both. So that our Apostle directs this Prayer in the Text to the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father; in consequence of this eternal Engagement; that, as the Spirit had graciously undertaken this Work, and entered into Covenant with them to perform it, they would accordingly send him down to effect those Things in, or upon the *Thessalonians*, *i. e.* to comfort their Hearts, and establish them in every good Word and Work. But I insist not upon this, because our Business at present is more especially with the two Objects mentioned in the Text, that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father.

1. Now as to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all agreed who to understand by those Words; every Body knows that this is the Name and Character of the eternal Word, the second Person in the Trinity, the one Mediator between God and Man. This being certain, we cannot but observe in reading

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ding this Passage, that the Lord Jesus Christ is here coupled with the Father, as an Object of Prayer, or religious Adoration. There is no Distinction between them in this Respect, if there was, the Advantage would rather fall on our Lord's Side, as being placed first in the Petition; but the Apostle prays indifferently and equally to both; the Consequence of which is, That as Prayer is a part of divine Worship, which is due to none but God ^a, (as all readily allow) so the Apostle by praying to Christ, making him the Object of this Duty, in Conjunction with the Father, avowedly acknowledges him as God, attests his Divinity in the fullest and strongest manner. If our Lord Jesus Christ is the Object of Prayer, as he abundantly appears to be from this Text, his Godhead in the strictest and highest Sense unavoidably follows; because, to pray to one that is not truly and really the most high God, is Idolatry; it is a giving that Honour to the Creature which is due only to the Creator. But this God will not put up with; for he has expressly said: *My Glory will I not give to another, neither my Praise to graven Images* ^b. Nor can we with the least Colour of Reason imagine, that the Apostle could be guilty of any thing like this, because, acting under the immediate Influence of the Holy Ghost,

^a Matt. iv. 10;

^b Isa. xlii. 8.

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he was infallibly secured from every Mistake in Doctrine, and from all Errors in Worship.

Besides, as none but God can be the Object of Prayer, so none but God is suited thereto; that is to say, is possessor of those Perfections which are necessary to render him the proper Object of that Worship. For who but the most high God can answer the Faith, Expectation and Hope of a poor Soul? And who, that is acquainted with the Nature of this Duty, will pray to one that is not equal to his Necessities, able to answer him in all that he calls upon him for? Let us see then what the Character of such a Person must be. Why, in the first place, here is required Ubiquity or Omnipresence, he must be every where at once: else how can he hear the dispersed Cries of his People, from one End of the Earth to the other? Again, Omniscience is another Essential in this Character, such a one must be acquainted with all the Necessities of his People, and know that they really want such Things as they ask at his Hands. Add to this infinite Wisdom, without which he cannot be qualified to judge what is best for them, in what Way, and at what Time it will be most convenient to answer them. Again, All-sufficiency is necessary in the Object of Prayer, that so he may be able to supply all the Needs of his Children out of his va-

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rious Fulness; and besides this, infinite or almighty Power, to prevent any Obstruction from Evils and Enemies of all Kinds, to support under Affliction, to deliver from it, to punish the Enemies of his People, and bestow proper Rewards upon them. What shall I say? that Person who is the proper Object of Prayer, must be possess of infinite Holiness and Truth, infinite Justice and Faithfulness, because, without these divine Perfections, he is capable neither to execute the Judgments threatened, nor accomplish the Good promised. In fine, to compleat such a Character, boundless Pity and Compassion, Tenderness and Love is requisite, that from such a divine Temper and Disposition, he may be always ready to exert his several other Perfections in a suitable way, for the Redress of those who pray to him. Now, who sees not that all these are the Properties of God alone, the incommunicable Properties of the divine Nature, (as they are usually, and justly called) those which are peculiar to the most high God; without which, as no Being can be suited to the Designs of religious Worship, so neither, upon any Account whatsoever, be entitled to it. What then is the natural Result of all this? Certainly it will necessarily follow from hence, that as our Lord Jesus Christ is here made the Object of Prayer, equally with the Father, he must,

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by undeniable Consequence, be possess'd of all the Perfections of the divine Nature ; and, if possess'd of all infinite divine Perfections, he must, for that Reason, be truly and really God ; God in the highest Sense of the Word.

And, indeed, all this is included in the very Things, which the Apostle here prays for in Behalf of the *Thessalonians*, and may be fully evinced from them ; namely, Comfort of Heart, and Stability in every good Word and Work. These are such Blessings, as none but God can bestow ; and therefore when the Apostle prays to our Lord for them, 'tis a strong Proof that he is God. For who has the Command of the Heart, and the Disposal of Grace, but he ? From whom comes this spiritual Joy at first ? Is it not from the Lord ^a ? Who then, but himself, can continue and increase it ? Who else can establish the Heart with Grace, and enable the Believer to persevere in the Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel ? Alas ! the least working of Corruption, the weakest fall of Unbelief, the smallest Temptation of Satan, would be too hard for the Christian, were there not the same divine Arm to carry on, as to begin ; to increase, as to implant. If therefore this be our Lord's Work, (though immediately effected by the Spirit) if he bestow these Blessings, and is to be ap-

^a Mai. lvii. 19.

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plied to for them, (all which is evident, from the Conduct of our Apostle in the Text) it is beyond Dispute, that he is possess'd of all infinite Perfections, and consequently the most high God. I shall have done with this Head when I have subjoin'd, that this was reckon'd a good Argument for the Divinity of our Lord, when *Arius* first broached his Heresy^a; and, I think, retains so much of its Force still, that the Gentlemen of the New Scheme, as they love to be called, cannot possibly set it aside. If they can divest the *Son* of this Character, if they can say more of the *Father*, why don't they? But here their Criticism and Artifice fail them. I go on,

2. To the other Object of Prayer, specified in the Text, and that is God the Father: *Now the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, &c.* I need not dwell here, all know who is meant by this Person; and all, who act upon the Principles of divine Revelation, are agreed, that the Father is the undoubted Object of Prayer. And the Reason is plain, because he is allowed, by general Consent, to be possess'd of all those Perfections, which are necessary to render him worthy of religious Adoration; such as we mentioned under the former Particular, as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ; and is thereby qualified to *do exceed-*

^a See *Pool's* Annotations on the Text,

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ing abundantly above and beyond all that his People can ask or think^a.

But though this is out of Dispute, yet some, observing the Order in which our Apostle addresses these Objects, may be ready to ask, Why is the Lord Jesus Christ placed first, or set before the Father, in this Prayer?

Now, in answer to this, I should think it might be sufficient to say in the general; That it is Reason enough for us, to know that it was the sovereign Pleasure of the Holy Ghost thus to guide our Apostle in this Prayer. 'Twas he that directed *Paul* into this Form of Address: And if the unerring Spirit of Wisdom has so order'd it, what have we further to do with it? Certainly it becomes us to rest satisfied with his Conduct in this, as well as in other Particulars, and not rashly bring him to our Bar, and make him accountable to us for his Measures. Let us take Care how we indulge an inquisitive Temper in these Cases, least, by prying into Things too deep for us, we entangle our selves, and are left to *darken Counsel by Words without Knowledge*^b. Not but I apprehend, we may be allowed, with becoming Reverence, to look into this Matter, and, by the Light of Revelation, may be able in some measure to account for it; and therefore I would endeavour, with the greatest Submission, to suggest a

^a Eph. iii. 20.

^b Job xxxviii. 2.

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few Things, which to me appear, at least, as probable Reasons or Grounds for it. Only I would previously observe, as the Foundation of most of these Reasons, That the Lord Jesus Christ is here to be consider'd not only as God, but as Mediator; and I am inclined to think the Holy Ghost might design to lead us into this, by speaking of Christ, under such Characters or Names, as manifestly express his Relation to his People; not so much simply as God, as in his Office-Capacity. Hence he calls him *our Lord Jesus Christ*, which, without Doubt, has an eminent Regard to him as Mediator. Now this being premised, he may be placed before the Father in this Prayer,

1.) Because there is no Way for fallen Creatures to come unto God, but by and thro' Christ. Since the first Way of Access to God was shut up by the Disobedience of our common Parent, there is no coming into the Divine Presence but by a Mediator; and there is only *one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus^a*; *for thro' him we both (h. e. Gentile and Jew) have an Access by one Spirit unto the Father^b*. There is no seeking any necessary Blessing at God's Hands but through his Mediation. As God descends, and conveys all down to us thro' Christ; so we ascend, and receive all from him in the same way. There is no

^a 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^b Eph. ii. 18.

coming

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coming to the Father (as our Lord himself says) so as to be accepted in our Persons, and answered in our Petitions, but by him. ^a He therefore is the next immediate Object of our Faith, and God the ultimate, according to 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him, h. e. the Lord Jesus Christ, do believe in God, that raised him up from the Dead, and gave him Glory, that your Faith and Hope might be in God.* How comes it about that we may exercise Faith and Hope in God as to any Blessings, whether of Time or Eternity? is it not thro' the Undertakings and Mediation of Christ? Well then may the People of God, in all that they want at his Hands, carry the Lord Jesus Christ in the Arms of their Faith, and set his Name first in all their Petitions. But then,

2.) All Grace was given to the Elect in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore they ought to apply directly to him for it. That all Grace was given them in Christ, is plain from those Words: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ^b*; compared with 2 Tim. i. 9. where the same Apostle, speaking of God, says: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ*

^a John xiv. 6.

^b Eph. i. 3.

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Jesus, before the World began. Grace here is to be taken in a large and comprehensive Sense, for all gracious Privileges, and for all gracious Influences of the Spirit, called *spiritual Blessings*, in the former Text ; and therefore includes not only Regeneration, and effectual Calling, Faith, Repentance, &c. but Sanctification and Establishment, all persevering and comforting Grace^a ; Grace to carry us thro' all Assaults both from Sin and Satan, to keep us close to the Lord in the Acknowledgment of the Truths, and in the Practice of the Duties of the Gospel ; which are the Blessings prayed for in the Text. Now if this be the Case, if all Grace, in the utmost Extent of the Word, was thus given to the Elect in Christ, if he was made the common Repository of it, had the whole Stock put into his Hands ; certainly this must needs be a good Reason why the Believer should immediately address him for it : especially if we add to this,

3.) That God treasured up all this Grace in Christ with a direct View to his People, that they might be supplied from him. All was given to Christ, as Head of the Election, that so he might give all down in a Covenant Way to them. It was put into his Hands, not only that it might not be lost, as the Image of God, or the original Rectitude of our Nature was, thro'

^a See Huxley on the Text, p. 555. §. 33.

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the Fall of our first Parents, not only that it might be preserved for them; but that it might be communicated to them at such Times, and in such Degrees, as he should see necessary. *As it pleased the Father that all Fulness should dwell in Christ^a*; so it was his Design herein, that *out of this Fulness his People should receive, and Grace for Grace^b*: that is to say, Grace answerable to the Grace that there is in Christ, that there may be the same Grace in the Members for Kind, tho' not for Degree, as there is in the Head; such as Faith, Love, Hope, Meekness, and the rest. As we derive all Polution and Depravity from the first *Adam*, so all Grace and Holiness is communicated to us from Christ, the second *Adam*. That *as we have born the Image of the earthy*, we might *also bear the Image of the heavenly^c*; the whole Election being *predestinated to be conformed to the Image of his Son^d*. Now if this be a just Representation of the Matter before us, as I think evidently appears from Scripture, it will be very easy to see, for what Reason the Saints ought to have a primary Regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, in all their Addresses to the Throne of Grace, why they should fix their Eyes immediately upon him, and keep him always in their View. If the Father has trea-

^a Col. i. 19.

^b John i. 16.

^c 1 Cor. xv. 49.

^d Rom. viii. 29.

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sured up all in Christ with a direct Eye to his People, and gives forth all to them by his Hands; to whom should the Saints go under all their Necessities, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Repository and Fountain of Grace, in whom all is laid up, and from whom all is communicated? Once more,

4.) All Grace is purchased by Christ for the Elect. This is sufficiently manifest, in that the Spirit of Grace, (who is so called, not only because the Gift of Grace, but also because the Author and Maintainer of all Grace) descends in the Virtue of Christ's Blood. The Spirit in his gracious Operations is the Fruit of Christ's Death; and therefore our Lord says, *If I go not away, (that is, if I don't suffer and die) the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you*^a. Hence likewise we are told, *That the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified*^b: plainly intimating, that the Spirit, in the Measure promised under the Gospel, was to descend from Christ, as a Fruit of his Sufferings and Exaltation. Agreeable to which he is said *to be shed on us abundantly thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour*^c. Now to what End is the Spirit sent by Christ? or why does God shed him abundantly upon his People *thro' Christ*; but to begin and carry on a Work of Grace

^a John xvi. 7.

^b John vii. 39.

^c Tit. iii. 6.

upon

upon their Souls ? or, as it is in our Text, after having wrought savingly upon them, to comfort their Hearts, and establish them in every good Word and Work ? The Inference from hence is plain, namely, that as Christ has purchased all Grace for his People, which appears from the Spirit's being given as a Fruit of his Death to work Grace in them ; the Saints have the highest Reason to apply to him in the first Place, for the Blessings in our Text. But then,

5.) The Means of Grace, such as the Word and Ordinances, and the dispensing of Grace by those Means for the Establishment and Comfort of his People, are in Christ's Hand ; and therefore they ought to have a primary Regard to him in their Addresses for these Things. As the Means of Grace under the Gospel are of Christ's Institution or Appointment, so they are under his Disposal and Management. He gifts Persons for the Ministry, and sends the Gospel by them where he pleases. Thus he ordered *Peter* to the Circumcision, and *Paul* to the *Gentiles* ^a; and sent the Gospel to one Country, and denied it to another ^b. He succeeds and blesses their Ministration, by sending the Spirit to set in with the Word and Ordinances for the Conversion, Establishment and Comfort of his People. This Power Christ is not only possessor of as

^a Gal. ii. 7, 8.

^b Acts xvi. 5, 6, 9.

God,

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God, but also as Mediator; so that he has both an essential, and an official Right to direct and succeed the Means of Grace, as he pleases. Of this latter he speaks, *Matth. xi. 6.* in these Words: *All Things are delivered unto me of my Father*; that is to say, All Things relating to the Salvation of his People: and therefore having mentioned this as an encouraging Motive, he adds, *ver. 28.* *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest.* To the same Purpose he says, *John xvi. 15.* *All Things that the Father hath, are mine*: that is, All that the Father hath purposed to bestow upon the Elect, all that he has promised and covenanted to do for them, with respect to Salvation, it is all mine, all at my Disposal, to be given out by me to them, whether it be Grace here, or Glory hereafter, or whatsoever has any Subserviency to those Ends. And therefore speaking of this delegated Authority, in his last Prayer to his Father, he says: *As thou hast given him Power over all Flesh, that he should give eternal Life to as many as thou hast given him*^a. Now from these several Passages it is very manifest, what Power Christ is invested with as Mediator, and likewise to what Purpose. He has all the Means of Grace in his own Hands, and the End is, that he may dispence all Grace to his People.

^a John xvii. 2.

Hence

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Hence our Lord makes use of this, when he sent forth his Disciples to preach the Gospel, together with the Promise of his gracious Presence, as an Argument to encourage them in the vigorous and chearful Discharge of their Work: *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and Earth, go ye therefore and teach all Nations*^a. And as it was a proper Ground of Encouragement for them, according to the Service they were engaged in, so is it a good Reason, why all his People, under a Sense of their Need of comforting and establishing Grace, should immediately address to Christ for it, who has not only all the Means of Grace at his own Dispose, but all Power to succeed those Means, and communicate proper Supplies by them. But then, separate from, and above all these Considerations, there is yet another Reason why Christ is here prayed to in the first Place; I mean,

6.) Because he is one with the Father in Nature, equal in Power and Glory. The Lord Jesus Christ, as God, is possess'd of the same divine Attributes and Perfections, as the Father; and therefore ought to have the same religious Honour, and Reverence paid to him. Hence our Lord tells us himself: *All Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*^b. And that we might be at no Loss upon this Account, that

^a Matth. xxviii. 18, 19.

^b John v. 23.

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we might perfectly know how to conduct our selves in a Matter of this Consequence; the Holy Ghost has made this Prayer of our Apostle a kind of Precedent for us. From whence it is easy to see, that one way of honouring Christ, even as we honour the Father, is to pay him supreme Adoration, not only to join him with the Father, but even sometimes name him before him in our Prayers. So evident is it, that the Father and he are one, that there is an Equality between them, that Christ and the Father are co-ordinate, that they stand upon the same Foot, being neither superior nor subordinate, with respect to Deity, and therefore that both are equally to share in the same divine Honour and Worship. And without doubt this was one principal Thing which the Holy Ghost had in view, by over ruling our Apostle to express himself after this manner. Because it really is so in Fact, and because it is necessary that we should know and believe it, therefore no constant Order is observed, but the Persons are mention'd promiscuously. And indeed the Father is so far from being ever set first, with Regard to Superiority, (which yet ought always to have been done, if it were so) that to throw an effectual Bar against any such Imagination, not only the Son is set before him in this Passage, but the Holy Ghost before the Father and Son, in *Paul's* former Epistle

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Epistle to the *Thessalonians*^a. Well, for these Reasons, Christ is to be pray'd to; for these Reasons, I conceive, he is by our Apostle mentioned before the Father in this Address. But I proceed to the

Second Thing in the Words, namely; The Motives encouraging the Apostle to put up this Prayer for the *Thessalonians*; Motives which will ever encourage the People of God to put up the same Request for themselves, and the whole *Houſhold of Faith*^b. Now these were their Interest and Property in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Relation which God stood in to them, the Affection which he had for them, and the Things which his Love had caused him to do on their Account; such as his giving them *Consolation* and *Hope*, which are both amplified by their Adjuncts, the one being called *everlasting*, and the other *good*; together with the moving Cause, or rich Spring, from whence these Blessings arose, which is the *Grace*, or free Love of God.

1. The first Motive, from whence the Apostle took Encouragement to put up this Request for the *Thessalonian Church*, was their Interest and Property in the Lord Jesus Christ, intended by the Pronoun possessive; *our*; *Our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is manifestly expressive of peculiar Interest in Christ.

^a 1 Theſſ. iii. 11.

^b Gal. vi. 10.

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And what greater Encouragement can the People of God have to put up such a Petition, as that in our Text? With what holy Liberty may they approach the Lord Jesus under such a believing View, in such an appropriating Act of Faith? To see our Interest in Christ under all the relative Characters which he here bears, must needs be a powerful Inducement to come *boldly to the Throne of Grace*^a for Stability and Comfort.

For, consider first, what is contained in his Character as *our Lord*. Why, he is not only *our Lord* to govern us, to rule in and over us, but likewise *our Lord* to protect and defend us from all those Evils and Enemies, which do and will attend us while here; Enemies that would not only prevent a Work of Grace from being wrought in our Souls, but if possible extinguish it, or always hinder its Growth when 'tis wrought. Now this makes it frequently necessary for the People of God to apply to him by Prayer for proper Measures of Grace and Strength. And what Freedom may they use in such Applications, where they can see their Interest in Christ as their Lord, and plead that Relation for Succour?

The same may be said as to the next Character, namely, *Jesus*. For this is a Name big with Salvation, and sounds forth nothing less than compleat Deliverance from all Evils and

^a Heb. iv. 16.

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Enemies, the certain Enjoyment of Grace here, and the full Possession of Glory hereafter. Under this Character we see in him every Thing that is needful to make us perfectly happy, both for Time and Eternity. As our *Jesus* he saves us from the Evil of Sin in its Guilt and Dominion, in its Punishment or Curse. He saves from the Guilt of Sin, by having taken our Sins upon himself, and made Satisfaction for them to divine Justice. He saves us from the Dominion of Sin, by *having crucified the old Man with himself, and so destroy'd the Body of Sin*^a. And he will at last save from the very Being of Sin, when he comes to take down the earthly Tabernacle, and compleat the Work of Sanctification at Death. Farther, as our *Jesus*, he saves from all the cursed Effects, or penal Fruits of Sin. This follows of course upon the former; where the Guilt of Sin is removed, Punishment on account of it necessarily ceases. And thus our Lord saves his People not only from *Wrath to come*^b, from that eternal Misery which shall fall upon the Wicked, as the just Demerit of their Sin; but likewise from every Thing that is penal in time. However he may see fit to exercise his Children by Affliction in this Life, nothing befalls them in a judicial Way; but having every Thing in his own Hand, he makes *ALL work together for good* to them^c. So

^a Rom. vi. 6.

^b 1 Thef. i. 10.

^c Rom. viii. 28.

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with Respect to Enemies of all Kinds, whether from within or without, whether the World or the Devil, Death or the Grave; he saves from all of them. He has destroyed *the Works of the Devil*^a, he has led *Captivity captive*^b, he has overcome *the World*^c, he has unstung *Death*, and vanquished the *Grave*^d. What shall I say? as our *Jesus* we have not only Impetration, but Application, not only the Purchase but the Possession. What he has bought by his Blood, he brings home by his Spirit; as he has purchased all Grace for us, so he works all Grace in us: and tho' 'tis only inchoative in time, yet he will bring it to Perfection in Glory. And indeed to have a View of the Lord as our *Jesus*, is to know that the *Day-spring from on high has visited us*^e; that Christ has already acted the Part of a Saviour towards us, in beginning a Work of Grace in our Souls; and that he will certainly go thro' with it, by compleating it in our eternal Happiness. How encouraging then to the Believer must such a Motive as this be? How freely may he pray to *his Jesus* for the Blessings in the Text? Especially if he considers at the same time, how willing and able Christ is to perform what he has undertaken as a Saviour, and how much his own Glory is concerned in his so doing.

^a 1 John iii. 8.

^b Eph. iv. 8.

^c John xvi. 33.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 55.

^e Luke i. 78.

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His Willingness appears from the whole Tenor of his Conduct, what he engaged in before Time, what he did while here upon Earth, and is now doing at his Father's Right Hand. His Ability for this Service cannot be questioned, when we read that he *is able to save them* (be they never so many) *to the uttermost, that come unto God by him*^a: h. e. to save fully and compleatly; from the uttermost Depths of Sin and Misery, to the uttermost Heights of Happiness and Glory, thro' the uttermost Bounds of Time, to a never-ending Eternity.

And then besides all this, the Glory of Christ is nearly concerned in these Things. Should his People fail of Establishment in every good Word and Work, of Perseverance to the End here, and consummate Happiness hereafter; then all that he did in the solemn Covenant-Transaction between the Father and himself, all that he laboured and toil'd, that he suffered and died for, while below, yea, all that he has been doing upon his People in the first Applications of Grace, would be entirely lost, quite fall to the Ground. And can we imagine any Thing like this? Can we think our Lord will grow indifferent to his own Glory? That he will lose the Honour of his Trust, or forfeit his Faithfulness? By no Means. If the Saints were put into his

^a Heb. vii. 25.

Hands,

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Hands, if he obliged himself by Covenant to bring them to Glory; and if as the hardest Part of his Work, and the principal Means to effect it, he has already laid down his Life for them, and taken Possession of them for himself, by beginning the good Work in their Souls; we may rest assured, that he will carry it on, that he will perfect that which concerns them, and, as a Means to it, furnish them with the necessary Supplies of all Grace.

And the People of God will see farther Reason to believe this, and pray to the Lord Jesus for it, if they reflect upon the third and last relative Character which he bears in our Text; which is *Christ*, or, according to Old Testament style, the *Messias*^a. Now this is as much as to say, That the Lord Jesus is the promised *Seed of the Woman*^b, that Person, whom the Father has found out, set apart, and every way qualified to act as Mediator, which leads us to consider him as charged with a three-fold Office. As *Christ* he is our *Priest*; and as such, one Branch of his Work is to expiate the Guilt of Sin, to atone the divine Wrath, and to make *Reconciliation for the People*^c. Agreeable to which he is said to have *purged away our Sins by the Sacrifice of himself*^d, to have *made Peace by the Blood*

^a John i. 41. ^b Gen. iii. 15. ^c Dan. ix. 24. ^d Heb. i. 3.

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of his Cross^a, and by one Offering to have for ever perfected them that are sanctified^b. By the other Part of his Priestly Office, having passed into the Heavens as their Fore-runner, he *appears in the Presence of God*^c in Behalf of his People, and *ever liveth to make Intercession for them*^d. And to give them the utmost Encouragement from his Advocacy, he is said to be *a merciful and faithful High Priest*^e, one that *was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*^f, and therefore is *able to succour them that are tempted*^g; one that is *touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*^h, and so is ready to sympathise with his People, and relieve them under their Difficulties. Again, as *Christ*, he is our *Prophet*, to enlighten and teach us by his Word and Spirit, to lead us into all necessary Truth, both as to Doctrine and Practice. And then, lastly, by Virtue of this Character he is our *King*, to subject us to himself, and reign in us by a Law of Faith, Love, and holy Fear; to subdue all his and our spiritual Enemies in this World, and bring us to *reign with him*ⁱ as Kings in the *World to come*^k.

Now if these be the Characters which our Lord sustains; if these are the Relations he stands in to his People, certainly a believing

^a Col. i. 20. ^b Heb. x. 14. ^c Ibid. ix. 24. ^d Ibid. vii. 25. ^e Ibid. ii. 17. ^f Ibid. iv. 15. ^g Ibid. ii. 18. ^h Ibid. iv. 15. ⁱ 2 Tim. ii. 12. ^k Heb. ii. 5.

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View of them, so as to be able to claim an
 Interest in him under all of them, must needs
 have a powerful Influence on the Soul, and
 encourage the Believer to pray to him for
 the Blessings in our Text. How can we be-
 hold Christ in these indearing Relations,
 with such Office-Capacity and Fulness,
 and at the same time see our own Interest in
 all that he is and has, and not come with
 an holy Boldness to him for a Supply of all
 necessary Grace and Strength? " Lord,
may such an one say, " was not all Grace
 " given to me in thy self, my great Co-
 " venant Head? Was it not laid up there
 " as in a common Bank for the Supply of
 " my Necessities, in Conjunction with the
 " rest of thy People? Hast not thou made
 " a Purchase of all Grace for me? Is not
 " the Disposal of it in thy own Hands?
 " Hast not thou begun the good Work in
 " my Soul, and undertaken for my com-
 " fortable Progress and Perseverance in
 " Grace; to defend me from all Evils and
 " Enemies; to save me thro' all Dangers
 " and Difficulties: and art not thou every
 " way equal to it as my Preist, Prophet, and
 " King? Hast thou not assured me of thy
 " Willingness in these Cases? Nay, is not
 " thy own Faithfulness and Glory interested
 " in my Establishment and Comfort?
 " Upon this Foot I come to thee, for these
 " Reasons I claim all at thy Hands, do thou
 " supply

“ supply me out of thy Fulness, and, according to thy Covenant Engagement, comfort my Heart, and establish me in every good Word and Work.”

2. The next Motive encouraging hereto, is the Relation which God stands in to his People, which is that of a Father. *Now the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, &c.* This Relation be- speaks the utmost Regard and Tenderneſs, the greateſt Readineſs in God to hear the Cries of his People, and the greateſt Willingneſs to answer and aſſiſt them. What Difficulty then can the Believer have in his Way? or rather, what Motive can he want that is proper to encourage him in his Addreſſes to the Lord? Does God ſtand in the Relation of a Father to the Saints? With what Boldneſs may they approach him? What holy Freedom may they uſe with him? With what Liberty may they unboſom themſelves to their Father? and with what Earneſtneſs plead their Relation as a prevailing Argument for being heard? For God has not only the Name, but the Nature of a Father, the Love, Bowels, Compaſſion, and Tenderneſs of a Parent. Our Lord argues upon this Principle, when he ſays to his Auditory on the Mount: *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone? or if he ask a Fiſh, will he give him a Serpent? If ye then being*

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evil,

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evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your Father, which is in Heaven, give good Things to them that ask him^a?

The Argument is plain: If our earthly Parents know what is suited to our Wants, and upon every Application to them, are ready to relieve us, so far as is in their Power; how much more shall our heavenly Father have his Ear open to the Cries of his Children? how much more will he be ready to answer them, in all that they call upon him for, agreeable to his Will, and wherein his own Glory is intimately concerned? And that this is the Case, with respect to the Blessing in our Text, is too evident to admit of a Dispute. Now this gives the Believer an Opportunity to petition for the Blessings in the Text after some such Manner as this: “ Father, “ *may he say*, I apply to thee in the Way “ which thou hast appointed, in the Name “ and prevailing Worthiness of thy dear “ Son; and I come for those very Things, “ which thou hast given all thy Elect in “ him, Things which he has purchased at “ the Expence of his Blood for them, and “ which by Virtue of his Purchase are be- “ come due to them by Covenant Agree- “ ment. I trust, thro’ distinguishing Grace, I “ am one of that Number, and therefore have “ a Right to enjoy these Things by thy Gift

^a Matth. viii. 9, 10.

“ and

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“ and Promise, thy Covenant and Oath, the
“ Purchase and Merits of my dear Lord. I
“ plead for this the Relation which thou
“ standest in to me, as my Covenant God
“ and Father. Hast thou not said to me in
“ my great Head, *I will be to thee a Father,*
“ *and thou shalt be to me a Son*^a, that thou
“ wilt act the Part of a Father towards me,
“ that thou wilt hear me in all my Requests
“ agreeable to thy Will, and supply me un-
“ der the Return of my various Necessities?
“ Lo! I plead this Relation with thee;
“ give me a fresh Instance of thy paternal
“ Affection, a further Proof of thy father-
“ ly Regard. Thou knowest the Weakness
“ of thy poor Child, I fly to thee for As-
“ sistance; strengthen me with all Might
“ in the inward Man, establish me in every
“ good Word and Work, comfort my Heart
“ with thy Comforts, which are not small,
“ while sojourning in this Wilderness, and
“ at last, having fulfilled in me the good
“ Pleasure of thy Goodness, and the Work
“ of Faith with Power, receive me to thy
“ Kingdom and Glory.” But I proceed,

3. God is not only said to be our Father,
but also to love us. *God even our Father, which*
bath loved us. This may be considered as an
additional Encouragement for the Soul to
pray to him for the Blessings in the Text;
because 'tis a Love with an Emphasis: Not

^a Heb. i. 5.

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that common, general Love, which he discovers for all his Creatures ; but that peculiar Favour ^a, that especial Love, which he bears to his own People ; a Love that has discovered it self in a very extraordinary Manner, even by his having made them his Children, and taken them into his Family. 'Twas this Instance of the Divine Love, that so much affected the Apostle *John*, and made him break out in such admiring Expressions: *Behold*, says he, *what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God^b!* And that his Love to them is of this kind, and exerts it self in this remarkable Way, is likewise evident, from what it has farther engaged him to do for, and bestow upon them. This Love has caused him to choose them to Salvation ^c; to bless them with all spiritual Blessings in Christ ^d; to give them Grace and Glory ^e; to prepare them a Kingdom ^f; to give them exceeding great and precious Promises ^g; to interest them in an everlasting Covenant, well ordered for this Life, as well as that which is to come ^h; yea, he has given them his Son, and with him all Things freely ⁱ; he has pardon'd their Sins, justified their Persons, regenerated and sanctified their Natures. What shall I

^a Psal. cvi. 4.

^b 1 John iii. 1.

^c 2 Thess. ii. 13.

^d Eph. i. 3.

^e 2 Tim. i. 9. and Tit. i. 2.

^f Matt. xxv.

34.

^g 2 Pet. i. 4.

^h 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

ⁱ Rom. viii. 32.

say ?

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say? Such have been his Regards to them, so has God loved them, so freely, so eminently, so superlatively, as to give them himself^a; himself in all his Persons and Perfections, to be their Defence here, and their exceeding great Reward hereafter^b. But why go I so far for Instances of God's Love? Have we not sufficient Proof of this in the Text? Are there not two ample Discoveries of it before us? Namely, his having given them *Consolation* and *Hope*, and those so wonderfully qualified; for, behold! 'tis no less than *everlasting Consolation*, nothing short of *good Hope*. Which leads me next to consider this double Instance of God's Love, as,

4. The fourth encouraging Motive, which the Believer has, to be importunate with the Lord for Stability and Perseverance.

And first, as to *Consolation*. Now there are three Words made use of in Scripture, which are descriptive of *Consolation*, tho' in different Degrees of it; such as *Peace*, *Comfort*, and *Joy*. *Peace* is an holy Rest or Quietude of Soul from the Hurries of an awakened Conscience, the Curses or Threatnings of a broken Law, and the Accusations of Satan. This the Believer enjoys as a Fruit or Consequence of his being led by Faith to see himself in a justified State. The Apostle puts

^a Jer. xxxi. 33.

^b Gen. xv. i.

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it upon this Issue, when he says, *Rom. v. i. Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ: by Faith*, that is, as I conceive, by having a believing Apprehension or View of our Justification. Where the Soul is possess'd of this Peace, there are no actual Doubts, tho' there may not be an absolute Assurance. Such an one is encouraged still to wait upon God, tho' he dare not say he has an absolute Interest in him.

As to *Comfort*, which is a different Word for Consolation in another Degree of it, that intends a settled Confidence, or an habitual Serenity of Mind. Where this frame of Spirit prevails, there is a steady Chearfulness of Soul, though not the high Tides of Consolation; constant Support, tho' not Ravishment. Now this more especially is what the Apostle calls *everlasting Consolation* in our Text; an habitual Confidence, or a settled Composure of Soul; the Continuance and Encrease of which he prays for, when he desires that God would *comfort the Hearts* of these believing *Thessalonians*. This is discoverable in that holy Alacrity and Pleasure, with which the Soul attends the Service of God; and in that Resignation and Chearfulness, with which the Believer behaves under Afflictions.

The last Word expressive of this Fruit of divine Love, is *Joy*. Now this is experienced
only

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only under some extraordinary Emotion of Soul, when the Tides of Consolation run high, and the Believer is greatly elevated. Joy is an high and sensible Comfort^a. This is not constant with the Believer, abides not with him always; but is let in upon the Soul upon some especial Occasions, as a Banquet reserved by God for Festival Dispensations^b. Thus after the Pangs of the new Birth, as Sorrow makes way for Joy, the Believer has something of this let in upon him. 'Tis with Respect to this in the spiritual, as it is in the natural Birth. *A Woman, when she is in Travail, hath Sorrow, because her Hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the Child, she remembreth no more the Anguish, for Joy that a Man is born into the World*^c. So likewise upon the Recovery of Backsliders, whose Bones, as the Psalmist speaks, have been broken; the Lord, according to his Prayer, is graciously pleased to cause them to bear Joy and Gladness^d. This particularly was the Case with the Prodigal upon his Return, who is thought by some to represent a Backslider. What Joy and Rejoycing was there upon this Occasion, according to *Luke xv. 22—25*? Then it is that the Saint's Apprehensions of pardoning Mercy are most raised and lively, and con-

^a Rom. xv. 13.
Vol. 4.

^b See Dr. Manton on Heb. vi. 17, 18.

^c John xvi. 21.

^d Psal. 51. 8.

sequently

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frequently his Joy most strong and elevated: Nothing so sweet and refreshing, as the Oil of Joy after the Spirit of Heaviness. It is likewise experienced upon the solemn Exercise of Grace in Duty, when the Word is either imprest, or revived with Power upon the Conscience, or we are more than ordinarily assisted in Meditation, Prayer, or at the Lord's Table^a. Again, in Times of Suffering and Self-denial, the Beleiver frequently tastes of this Joy; for God is never behind hand with his People; if he calls them to outward Sufferings, he knows how to support them by inward Consolation and Joy^b. And indeed sometimes a Child of God is sensibly touched with it at the Hour of Death, and in the Views of Eternity; then has the Lord been pleased to lift up the Light of his Countenance, and has filled the dying Beleiver *with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*^c. But Instances of this kind are not very common, this is not the Lot of all God's Children, tho' equally dear to him.

But this may suffice for the Thing it self; let us next consider the Epithet by which it is amplified, and that is *everlasting*: *And hath given us everlasting Consolation*. How can this be, may some say? Tho' it should be allowed that God does give every one, whom he calls by his Grace, Consolation and Joy in beleiving, more or less spiritual Com-

^a Psal. civ. 34. Cant. i. 12. ^b 2 Cor. i. 5. ^c 1 Pet. i. 8.
for

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fort when he first brings them to a View of their Interest in Christ; yet how can this be justly termed everlasting, when the Believer's Joy is so frequently interrupted by a Variety of Troubles, and when, to outward Appearance, he is so far from it, that he is exceedingly overwhelmed and dejected at Times? To this we answer,

1.) That this Consolation may very well be called everlasting, in Opposition to, or Contradistinction from all other Joy, all worldly Comfort and Consolation. For what is the natural Man's Joy? 'Tis only as the *crackling of Thorns under a Pot*^a; it gives a sudden Bounce, a short-lived Blaze, and is gone: 'tis a Joy very often forced, and, when loudest, is generally most empty; and therefore *Solomon* gives us this farther Account of it: *Even in Laughter the Heart of such an one is sorrowful*^b, having no Foundation for his Mirth. Whereas the Believer's Joy, whether greater or less as to Degree, is always solid, and substantial: it is an abiding Seed in the Soul, though it does not always appear; hence it is said: *Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart*^c. And the Reason of it is evident, because this Joy is a *Fruit of the Spirit*^d; and all the Graces of the Spirit are implanted in the Soul at once,

^a Eccl. vii. 6.

^b Prov. xiv. 13.

^c Psa. xcvi. 11.

^d Gal. v. 22.

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though

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though they do not all spring up together. And though it cannot be denied, but this Joy is liable to Interruptions from various Occurrences; yet even in the midst of outward Trouble and Affliction the Believer may, and very often is, filled with inward Consolation and Joy. Witness the Account which the Apostle gives us of himself, and the rest of his Companions in Sufferings: *For as the Sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ*^a. But this is not the only Reason why the Believer's Consolation is termed everlasting in our Text. For,

2.) There is certainly the best Reason in the World for it, if we consider the Foundation upon which it is raised, or the Spring from which it proceeds; the one able to support, the other capable to supply it for ever. This will appear by a brief Enumeration of several Things, which meet in the Composition of this Foundation or Spring. Such as,

(1.) The *everlasting Love* of God. Himself gives us this Account of it, when he corrects the Notions of the *Jewish Church* on this Head. The Church says, referring to his Care of them in the Wilderness; *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me: yea,* (says the Lord, not of old only, that is, to post-date it, but) *I have loved thee with an*

^a 2 Cor. i. 5. and Chap. vi. 10.

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everlasting Love; *therefore with loving Kindness have I drawn thee*^a.

(2.) To this we may add, The everlasting Covenant of Grace, which David mentions, as the Foundation of his Comfort and Joy, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Although my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all Things, and sure; for this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, altho' he make it not to grow.* And to this Covenant the Lord has added his Oath, that so by two immutable Things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, the Heirs of Promise might have strong Consolation^b. Now these two immutable Things are the Promise and Oath of God. And where shall we find this Word of Promise, but in the Covenant of Grace, which is nothing else but a Collection, or Bundle of Promises, of which the first and chief is: *I will be their God, and they shall be my People*^c: which includes God's being to them, and doing for them, all that is necessary for Creatures; all that God can be to them, or do for them, as such. If any ask what this is? The Answer may be in that extensive Promise: *The Lord is a Sun and Shield; the*

^a Jer. xxxi. 3. *The Supplement (saying) in our Translation ought to be struck out, as perverting the Sense, and destroying the Design of the Text. Vide Poli Synop. Crit. in loc. Husley on the Text, Ch. vi. p. 113, &c.*

^b Heb. vi. 17, 18.

^c Jer. xxxi. 33.

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Lord will give Grace and Glory; no good Thing will be withhold from them, that walk uprightly^a. And that he might leave no room for Suspicion, but assure his People of the Accomplishment of his Promise, he has confirm'd it with an Oath: *Once have I sworn by my Holiness, that I will not lie unto David*^b. The Lord has not only given his Oath, but he has sworn by the most sacred of all his Attributes, that he will make good his Covenant to Christ, our spiritual *David*, and his Seed. What then could God do more for the strong Consolation of his People? How firm a Basis does it stand upon? How justly may it be called everlasting?

(3.) There is the *everlasting Righteousness* of Christ, as the Holy Ghost calls it by *Daniel*, Ch. ix. 24. Now this takes in, or is made up of the spotless Purity, and habitual Holiness of Christ's Nature as Man. Thus many judicious Divines understand the Apostle, when he says: *The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of Sin and Death*^c. Here the Apostle opposes the Purity of Christ's Nature to the Corruption of ours, which not only inclines to Sin, but binds over to Death. Now what is immediately suited to the Relief and Comfort of the Soul in this Case? Why, the habitual Righteousness of Christ's Nature; *the Law of the Spirit of Life in*

^a Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

^b Psal. lxxxix. 35.

^c Rom. viii. 2.

Christ Jesus. And this we find was the Improvement which the Apostle was helped to make of it. The other Branches of this Righteousness follow, in the third and fourth Verses of this Chapter: *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak thro' the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the Flesh; that the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us.* Where the Apostle evidently sets before us Christ's perfect Obedience to the Precept of the Law, and his undergoing the Penalty or Curse of it; and this he says was, that *the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us*, h.e. in our Nature by our Representative or Substitute. Hence his active and passive Obedience is ours, as much as if we had obeyed and suffered in our own Persons. The Law is wholly fulfilled by him, and that very Righteousness is ours in a Law Sense, and so fulfilled in us^a. And therefore the Apostle might well say, Ch. x. 4. That Christ is become *the (fulfilling) End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believes.* Now in order to this, *when the Fulness of the Time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law*^b. Our Lord Jesus Christ, putting himself in the Law Place of

^a See Cross's Sermon on Rom. iv. 5, 6. *in fine.*

^b Gal. iv. 4, 5.

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the Elect, was made Sin, and a Curse for them; obey'd and suffered in their Room and Stead, *the Just for the Unjust, that so he might bring them to God^a*, to Communion with him here, and full Fruition of him hereafter. And what an happy Influence must this have on the Believer's Consolation?

(4.) We may take into this Account the everlasting Priesthood of Christ, that is to say, the sovereign Virtue or Efficacy of his Sacrifice, and his continual Intercession at the Father's Right Hand. Christ is a *Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedeck^b*. He offered himself an expiatory Sacrifice here below, and is now *entred, by his own Blood, into the Holiest above, there to appear in the Presence of God for his People^c*. What is the Consequence of this? Why, *because he ever lives, they shall live also^d*. The Intercession of Christ, managed in the Influence of his own Blood, effectually secures the final Perseverance and compleat Happiness of the Elect: For, (as the Apostle saith) *if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life^e*. This then is the Bottom, upon which the Believer's Consolation rests, the Spring from whence it arises, and as it can never be overthrown under the former Veiw, nor

^a 1 Pet. iii. 18.

^b Psal. cx. 4.

^c Heb. ix. 12, 24.

^d Heb. vii. 25.

^e Rom. v. 10.

ever be dried up under the latter ; a Consolation so well supported and fed, may, with good Reason, be termed everlasting. But I shall dismiss this Head, when I have added,

3.) That it may likewise be so called, not only because it is the Pledge, Earnest, or first Fruits of everlasting Joy in the heavenly State, but because it is indeed the Beginnings of that Joy. 'Tis a Joy of the same Nature, tho' not in the same Degree ; the same for Kind, tho' not for Perfection. The Believer has the same Objects of Consolation here, that the Saints have above ; but here they are seen *thro' a Glass darkly, there Face to Face*^a ; here by Intervals, there without Interruption. And as there is this Difference in the Sight and Enjoyment of these Objects ; so consequently there must be an equal Difference in the Joy that arises from them, as to Degree and Continuance. In Heaven, where the Vision of God and Christ is immediate and uninterrupted, the Joy of the glorified Saint must be full ; but on Earth, while this Vision is so very obscure, and so frequently intercepted, it must needs fall unspeakably short. Yet still is it a Consolation of the same sort, that which comes down from Heaven, which is a Pledge of it, and will at last be compleated in it. But this for the first Fruit of God's Love, *everlasting Consolation.*

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

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The second Fruit of this Love, mentioned above, is *Hope*. Now Hope, in the Scripture Use of the Word, is a patient, assured Expectation of enjoying all future Good promised to us. Hence we read of the *Patience of Hope*, 1 Thess. i. 3. and the *Affurance of Hope*, Heb. vi. 11. The general Object of Hope is some Good, and not Evil; for Evil is the Object of Fear. Hope acts upon the same Things as Faith does, only Faith looks at the Truth of the Things promised, Hope at the Good contained in them. And then; as the Object of Hope is some Good, so not that which is present, but future. For, as the Apostle saith: *What a Man seeth, why doth he yet hope for^a?* Hope acts upon future Good, either in this Life, or that which is to come; for it extends to all future Good in both Worlds; all that relates to Life and Godliness, to Time and Eternity. And then lastly, Hope is concerned with promised Good; for where there is no Promise to build upon, there is no Room for the Exercise of Hope. That Hope, which is not built upon a *sure Word^b* of Promise, will prove like a *Spider's Web^c*. And therefore 'twould be very well, if the Persons who have those Words so frequently on their Tongues, as *I hope for Mercy*, and, as *I hope to be saved*; 'twould be well, I say, if these Persons would consider what Ground

^a Rom. viii. 24.

^b 2 Pet. i. 19.

^c Job viii. 14.
they

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they have for their Hope: Their talking of the Thing; and taking the Word so familiarly into their Mouths, will be of no Service to them, unless they have some Promise to build upon. But to return.

This Hope is another Fruit of God's Love, and a noble one too, if we consider of what Use it is to the People of God in this World. Here the Believer is attended with a great Variety of Troubles from within, and from without. Well, how comes it that he does not sink under his Burden? Why, Hope bears him up: as he is brought to see that there is Need of these Things; so he hopes for Support while under them, for the Presence of God with him in his Afflictions, for a sanctified Use of all Trials, and in the Lord's Time for a happy Deliverance from them. And his Hope in all these Cases is bottom'd upon that Word, which is inviolable. For God has said, that he will *put underneath everlasting Arms*^a; that he *will be with his People in the Fire*, and in *the Water*^b, under the sharpest and most afflictive Dispensations; that he will *make every Thing work together for good to them*^c; that *no Temptation shall take them, but such as is common to Man*; that he will *not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able*; and that *with the Temptation also*

^a Deut. xxxiii. 27.

^b Isa. xliii. 2.

^c Rom. viii. 28.

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he will *make a Way to escape*^a. Now an assured Expectation of these Things must needs be attended with unspeakable Advantage to the Believer, must needs keep him chearful under Afflictions, and give him Occasion to bless the Lord for them. Thus *David* could say, *Psal. cxix. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes*; compared with *ver. 67. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word*. This Hope encourages the Soul to believe, that nothing shall ever separate him from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus^b; but that he shall be brought off in the End more than Conqueror^c over all his spiritual Enemies. So that his Hope is an *Helmet*^d to defend him from slavish, tormenting Fear; and an *Anchor* to stay, and bear him up in all spiritual Storms; an *Anchor* which entereth into that within the *Veil*^e; takes hold on the Covenant Love of God, the Blood, Righteousness, and Intercession of Christ; and so enables the Believer to triumph over Sin and Death, over the Grave and the Devil. Hope fixes the Eye of the Soul upon Heaven and Happiness, and by leading the Believer to consider, *that the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us*^f hereafter, wonderfully re-

^a 1 Cor. x. 13.

^b Rom. viii. 39.

^c Ibid. ver. 37.

^d 1 Thess. v. 8.

^e Heb. vi. 19.

^f Rom. viii. 18.

conciles to, and supports under Afflictions. Nay, verily this *Hope*, or raised Expectation of the heavenly Happiness, gives Afflictions another Turn, casts them into a different Mold, and, as it were, alters their very Nature; for where this is the Case with the Soul, as the heaviest Afflictions become *light*, so they *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*^a. Now how is this? but as the Soul by an Eye of Faith, and in the Exercise of Hope, is lead to deal with future, and eternal Objects, as tho' present and in Possession. By this Means, Heaven, as it were, is let in upon the Believer. He is disengaged from the Things of this World, and even made to rejoice under the Cross, as what lies in his Way to the Crown.

If Hope then is of no less Use to the Believer than this, certainly 'tis an Instance of the Overflowings of God's Love, that he would put such a precious Weapon into the Hands of his Children, while engaged in a spiritual Warfare, while encompassed with Enemies on all Sides. Oh what a choice Peice of the Believer's spiritual Armour is this! How loudly does it witness to divine, distinguishing Grace! But I pass this to consider

The Epithet by which this Hope is described and amplified, and that is *good*. It

^a 1 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

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is *good Hope*. Now it may be so called upon many Accounts; particularly with respect to its Author or Efficient, which is God himself, therefore called the God of Hope, *Rom. xv. 13*. It is the great, and good God, who plants this *Hope* in his People; and as all his Works are good, because his, so this amongst the rest. It may likewise be so called on account of its Subjects, those in whom it is wrought, namely, Believers; who are comparatively good, good in a Gospel Sense, thro' the regenerating Influences of the Holy Ghost. Add to this, that the *Hope* in our Text may be denominated *good* with Respect to its Objects, which is all promised *Good*, all unenjoyed future *Good*, especially Heaven and Happiness, which are therefore called *that blessed Hope*, *Tit. ii. 13*. See also Chap. i. 2. and *Rom. v. 3*. where we read of *the Hope of the Glory of God*, and *the Hope of eternal Life*. Again, this *Hope* is deservedly called *good*, on account of its Ground or Foundation. The Apostle uses the Word *Hope* in this Sense, when he prays for the *Epheians*, that *the Eyes of their Understanding being enlightned*, they might *know what is the Hope of his Calling*, ^a h. e. What the Hope of God's called ones is bottom'd upon. This Hope is good, because it has a good Foundation. And what is this? The unchangeable Nature of

^a Eph. i. 18.

God,

God, the Immutability of his Love, Purposes, Decrees, and Covenant; the Death and Sufferings of Christ; and the Engagement of the holy Spirit to maintain the Work of Grace in the Souls of the Elect against all Opposition, and absolutely *perfect it in the Day of Christ*^a. In fine, this *Hope* may be called *good*, on account of its present Use and constant Serviceableness to the Believer both in Life and at Death, being therefore (as we observed before) compared to an *Helmet* and *Anchor*.

Thus we see what Instances of Love the Lord is pleased to afford his People, what kind of *Consolation* and *Hope* he graciously bestows upon them, as the one is *everlasting*, and the other *good*. Certainly then, those who have had any Taste of these Things, any Experience of the Love of God in these Instances, cannot but think it abundant Matter of Encouragement, why they should daily pray to him for the Continuance and Encrease of the Mercies in our Text.

Before I proceed to the other Branches of the Text, give me Leave to break in upon your Patience so far, as to acquaint you with the Experience of our departed Friend in both these Particulars. The Lord had been pleased to indulge her with this *everlasting Consolation* in its several Degrees. She

^a Phil. i. 6.

knew

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knew what it was to have Peace of Conscience from the Views of an Interest in the Blood and Righteousness of Christ. She was not only brought to acknowledge, that if ever she was saved, it must be in this Way; but was helped to venture her Soul with Christ, and from a View of her Justification by him, was filled with inward Peace and Satisfaction. She had no small Share in the comfortable Part of the Christian's Experience. She was favour'd with that Serenity of Mind and Chearfulness of Spirit, which made Attendance in God's House, and Service in her own, pleasurable to others as well as her self. She was no Stranger to the Joy and Rapture of Faith, but in many sweet Intercourses between God and her Soul, had experienced the Triumph and Elevation, which accompanies the inward Witnessings of the Spirit. 'Tis true, she was not without her Doubts at Times, but as they could not root out her Experience, so neither could they overturn her Hope. That was still as the *Anchor* of her *Soul*, *sure and stedfast*, *entring within the Veil*, and fastening on the Covenant Love and Faithfulness of God. This Assurance I had from her own Lips, but a few Hours before her Dissolution, when she express'd her self to this Purpose: "I do not, *said she*, "find those rapturous Discoveries, those "very delightful Manifestations, which I
"have

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“ have experienc’d in time past ; but I
“ am brought to depend upon the un-
“ changeable Love of God, and the Faith-
“ fulness of that Covenant, which is *ordered*
“ *in all Things, and sure.*” And much to
the same Effect, only fuller, is the Account
that she left behind her in Writing, penn’d
above a Year before her Death *, in which
she has these Words : “ Finding my Di-
“ stempers growing upon me, and the out-
“ ward Man greatly decaying, I have Rea-
“ son to think I shall not be long with you ;
“ and if taken away before you, do not
“ mourn as one without Hope. For tho’
“ ’tis not with me as it ought to be, and I
“ have been very barren and unfruitful, un-
“ der the Means I have been favour’d with,
“ and dare not say I have a full Assurance ;
“ yet, blessed be God, I can say, I have
“ *good Hope thro’ Grace*, that for me to die
“ will be Gain. Hope I have experienced
“ something of the Divine Spirit witnessing
“ with my Spirit, that I am a Child of
“ God, redeemed by the precious Blood of
“ a dear Jesus, upon whose Merits and
“ Righteousness alone I depend for Life
“ and Salvation.” You see from hence up-
on what her Hope was bottom’d, from
whence her Consolation sprung, how sensi-
ble she was of remaining Infirmities, and

* In a Letter to Mr. Clarke, found amongst her Papers since
her Decease.

how

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how willing to resolve all into the Grace of God. But this leads me to the last Motive in the Text, namely,

5. The rich Spring and Origin of this Love, with its several Fruits or Effects, especially those of Consolation and Hope, and that is the *Grace* of God. *Who has given us everlasting Consolation and good Hope thro' Grace.* 'Tis from hence that the Blessings in our Text take their Rise; from the Grace, *b. e.* the free Love, and unmerited Favour of God. What is this *everlasting Consolation and good Hope* owing to? Not to our own Works, or Worthiness; not to what we are, or what we can do. No, they flow down to us in a way of sovereign Mercy and Grace. Had it not been for *Grace*, fallen, apostate Creatures would never have heard of any such Thing; Consolation and Hope of any sort, in any Degree, had never been experienced, much less that which is everlasting and well grounded. But since this Grace has acted in such a Way, since it has overflowed in this Manner, what may not the Believer expect from it? Has this Fountain already sent forth such rich Streams? 'Tis still as full, and flows as freely, as ever. Nothing can dry up the Spring, nothing cut off the Streams. Did God love the Believer freely at first, and as an Instance of it, has he freely given *him everlasting Consolation and good Hope*? 'Tis a sufficient Encouragement

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agement to pray for the Continuance and Encrease of them. Salvation in every Part of it, from the Beginning to the End, is free, *without Money and without Price*^a, neither the first Communications of Grace, nor any after Supplies are suspended upon the Creature's Worthiness; but in both Cases the Lord is gracious, purely because he will be gracious. With what Boldness then may the Believer come to the Lord for the Blessings in the Text, tho' conscious of much Imperfection; since free Love triumphs over all, since *Grace reigns thro' Righteousness unto eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*^b? What should be the Improvement of this? Certainly Grace ought to wear the Crown. God intended this by the Display of it in our Salvation. All that he has done in it was designed *to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace*^c; and therefore the chief Aim of the Christian should be, not only to speak, but live the Praise of Divine Grace. But I hasten to the last Thing in the Text, namely,

Thirdly, The Matter of the Apostle's Prayer, or the Things he prays for, and they are two, Comfort of Heart, and Stability in every good Word and Work. In speaking to which I must be very short.

1. He prays that God would *comfort* their *Hearts*. Now this seems to be the same

^a Isa. lv. 1.

^b Rom. v. 21.

^c Eph. i. 6.

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thing with Consolation in the preceding Verse, which the Apostle speaks of, as *given* to these believing *Thessalonians*; which may occasion such a Question as this: If it was already given them, why does he yet pray for it? To this it may be answered, When the Apostle prays that God would comfort their Hearts, he is not to be understood as meaning that God would give them divine Consolation in its Principle, or work the first spiritual Joy in their Souls thro' believing; no, this they had, they were not destitute of the Thing in its Habit, nor wholly Strangers to its Exercise, they had, no doubt, at times, experienced a comfortable Degree of it; but the Apostle prays that they might live in a continued Sense of it, that their Joy might be daily in exercise, and that if the Lord pleased, they might be favoured with it in a greater Measure. And thus I apprehend the Saints, who have received a Measure of Grace, and, it may be, have had a Discovery of the Pardon of Sin, are nevertheless to pray for Pardon, and likewise for all Grace, that is to say, for a continued Sense of the Pardon of their Sins, and if the Lord please, for a larger Income of Grace. And we shall see sufficient Reason for the Conduct of the Apostle in this Particular, and sufficient Cause for the Saints to follow him herein, by putting up the same Request for themselves, which he does
for

for the *Thessalonians* ; if we consider how liable the People of God are to lose their present Comfort, and faint in their Minds, either thro' the prevailing of Corruption, or by reason of new Temptation and Affliction. The Saints are here in a Wilderness-state surrounded with Difficulties ; they are Pilgrims and Strangers upon the Earth, and so have many Ups and Downs, meet with foul Weather as well as Sun-shine ; they are Soldiers, and so have many Enemies to encounter ; Grace is weak in many, and very imperfect in the best : Unbelief frequently prevails, and the Lord many times hides his Face, which damps their spiritual Comfort and Joy. This was *David's* Case, when he said, *My Mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved ; but in the next Words, thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled*^a. Now what must they do under such Circumstances ? How necessary is it, that they should pray to the Lord for the Continuance and Increase of spiritual Comfort, and likewise for Establishment in every good Word and Work. Which leads me,

2. To the other Thing here prayed for, which is Stability in *every good Word and Work*.

1.) In *every good Word*. Now by this we are not to understand the Words of our Lips in common Conversation, tho' we ought to

^a Psal. xxx. 6, 7.

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pray that these may be savory, *seasoned with Salt*^a, that they may minister Grace to the Hearers. No corrupt Communication should proceed out of our Mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying^b. Not foolish Talking nor Festing^c; not foolish Questions that tend to Jangling^d; all which is forbidden. But by *Word* here is meant the Gospel in general, or the Truths of it in particular. Hence the Gospel is called the *Word* barely, *Rom. x. 8.* and the *faithful Word*, *Tit. i. 9.* And the Doctrines of it the *Form of sound Words*, *2 Tim. i. 13.* Agreeable to this, the Character of a Minister in Scripture is, one *that labours in the Word and Doctrine*^e; and the Apostle exhorts *Timothy* to study, to shew himself a Workman, by rightly dividing the *Word of Truth*, *2 Tim. ii. 15.* Every good *Word* here is the same with the *Traditions* the Apostle speaks of *ver. 15.* and so includes all the Doctrines of the Gospel, and particularly among the rest, the Doctrines of God, his Being, and Decrees; the Doctrine of personal Election and Reprobation, of Creation and Providence, of the Covenants of Grace and Works, of the Fall and Recovery of the Elect, of the Headships of the *first* and *second Adam*; of the Natures, Person, and Offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Execution of

^a Col. ii. 6.

^b Eph. iv. 29.

^c Ibid, v. 4.

^d Tit. iii. 9.

^e 1 Tim. v. 17.

those

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those Offices in his State of Humiliation and Glory; the Doctrines of Redemption and Satisfaction, Justification by an imputed Righteousness, efficacious Grace, or the absolute Necessity of the Spirit's Operations, both to the Being of Grace, and the Performance of good Works with Acceptance, with the final Perseverance of the Saints, and the rest. These, with the other Doctrines of the Gospel, are the *every good Word*, which the Apostle intends in our Text. Upon this Foundation we are to stand; these Truths we are to hold fast; in the Faith and Profession of these we ought to be established, as the Apostle here expresses it: which, would Time permit, would lead us to consider the Import of that Phrase, the Expression being of the same Meaning with others in the New Testament, where we are bid *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*^a, *to stand fast, and quit our selves like Men*^b, *to hold fast the Form of sound Words*^c, and *to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*^d.

Now these may be called good, because their Author is so, *God is good*; and because, as they flow from his Goodness, they are likewise Discoveries of his *good Will towards Men*. They may likewise be so called, be-

^a Heb. x. 23.

^b 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

^c 2 Tim. i. 13.

^d Jude, Ver. 3.

cause

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cause they produce good Effects, being the Means of the Sinner's Conversion, (for which Reason the Gospel, in the Hands of the Spirit, is called *the Power of God to Salvation*^a) and also of his Establishment and Growth in Grace, his Peace, Comfort, and Joy in believing. In a Word, they may be so called, because they contain in themselves, and secure to the Saints, the greatest good imaginable, all that deserves to be called so, namely, Grace here, and Glory hereafter. This is the first Thing which the Apostle prays for, that they may be *stablished in every good Word*, every good Word of Promise, and every good Word of Command. Which brings me,

2.) To the other Thing here pray'd for, namely, their Establishment in *every good Work*, Time will not allow us to enter into Particulars under this Head.

We may see what this *every good Work* is, in its general Amount, *Tit. ii. 12.* where we are told, that *the Grace of God* (by which is meant the Doctrine of Grace, or the Gospel Revelation) *teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.* Soberly, respects all good Works towards our selves; righteously, all good Works towards our Neighbours; godly, all good Works towards the Lord. So that when the Apostle prays, that the *Thessalo-*

^a Rom. i. 16.

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nian Church might be stablished in every good Work, he takes in the whole Compass of Duty, and means their Perseverance therein.

If any ask, How a Work comes by this Denomination? We answer, that a Work may be called good, on account of the good Author producing it; the good Subject from which it proceeds, (for the *Tree must be made good*, before it can *bring forth good Fruit*^a) and lastly, a Work may be so called, because good in its Effects, as it tends to the Glory of God, and the Advantage of others; for these Things (says the Apostle) *are good and profitable unto Men*^b.

Here likewise it might be demanded, When may a Work be said to be good? The Answer to this is, that a Work may be good, materially and formally: a Work is good materially, when it is for the Matter of it, what God hath commanded; it is good formally, when it is for the manner of it, as he has required. To make a Work completely good, it must be what God hath commanded, and as God has commanded, *b. e.* it must be done in Faith, from a Principle of Life, and from Love to God, thro' a right Medium, that is, in the Name, and thro' the Mediation of Christ; and lastly, to a right End, that is to say, with an Eye

^a Mart. xii. 33.

^b Tit. iii. 8.

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to the Honour and Glory of God. But I must not enlarge upon these Things.

As to proper Reflections on this Subject, they are so easy to be made, that I need only mention them, and leave you to enlarge upon them in your own Minds.

1. Then, who but will observe, from the Example and Practice of the Apostle in our Text, that it is the Duty of every Believer to labour after Comfort and Stability; after the latter, as the best Means to the former? This should be his constant Endeavour, what he should diligently pursue at all times; and that so much the more, as he is liable, through divers Temptations, to fall from his *Stedfastness*^a, and flag in his Comfort.

2. From hence likewise enquiring Souls are directed where to look for Stability and Comfort in the want of those Mercies, namely, to *the Lord Jesus Christ, and God even our Father*. God is the Author and Giver of these Things, as well as the Maintainer and Increaser of them in the Soul; and therefore, under the want of these Blessings, our continued Applications should be to him for them.

3. We may also gather from hence, what Means we are to make use of, as most likely to attain this desirable End, namely, constant and earnest Prayer to the Lord, at

^a 2 Pet. iii. 17.

least the use of all other Means, such as hearing and reading the Word, &c. should be accompanied with Prayer. Our Apostle took this Method in Behalf of the *Thessalonians*; and doubtless he is herein an Ensamble to us, we ought to be found in the same Practice for our selves.

I have done with what your Time would allow me to offer in a doctrinal Way, and, indeed, should have thought of concluding this Discourse, were I not apprehensive that something more is expected, with Regard to the Deceased, and the Improvement of the Providence before us.

As to the former, 'tis proper I should tell you, that as Characters on these Occasions, are no more agreeable to the surviving Relatives, than they were to our deceased Sister ; you must neither expect so particular an Account, as she deserves, nor as otherwise it might have been my Inclination to have given. Being thus restrain'd, I am oblig'd to take no Notice of her many natural Endowments, and personal Qualifications, the Prudence, Temper, and Conduct observable in her civil Oeconomy ; and therefore I shall forbear enlarging on these Things, and chiefly insist on her Character as a Christian.

Now as to this in general, it is easy to conclude, from what was before suggested, that she was a serious experimental Christian;

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ftian; one that had a through Acquaintance with her self, as to her loft State by Nature; the Imperfection and Nothingness of her own Righteousness, and the Suitableness and Sufficiency of Christ's, being emptied of self, and brought to depend entirely upon him. From the same Account we may likewise observe, that she had a deep Sense of the divine Love, a Consciousness of her own Weakness, and the Necessity she stood in of daily Supplies from the Lord. She was helped to see that all flowed down to her from the rich Grace of God, and was concerned that she had improved no more under the Means of Grace, which tended to lay her low in her own Eyes, and fill her with admiring Sentiments of the forbearing Goodness of the Lord. But if particular Instances be desired, what can I, in the first Place, rather choose to observe, than her close Walk with the Lord, both in her own House, and in the Church?

In her own House, her Delight was in the Closet: Here she employ'd the vacant Hours of Life, here she gave her self up to Reading and Prayer; both these were pleasurable Exercises to the Deceased, Prayer especially: the Time which she spent in that Duty, and the Communion she enjoy'd with God in it, were only known to him and her own Soul. Nor did she love this Duty in secret only, but jointly with
her

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her Family. Such was her Affection for it in this way, that she was so far from intrenching upon Family Prayer, that she was always a great Promoter of it, to such a Degree, that though under some Circumstances it might have been omitted, yet she would never retire till that Duty was over; a sufficient Proof that she could not go to Rest with Satisfaction, before she had acknowledged her Dependence upon the Lord, and her daily Obligations to him. And, as she always loved this Exercise, so she was favour'd with it to the last; for Family Duty had not been long ended, before her Prayers were turned into Praises.

With respect to the House of the Lord, how great her Love was to that, many here have been Witnesses. Many of you, my Friends, are sensible that she would never lose any Opportunity of attending publick Worship. If it was possible for her to come Abroad, if she had Strength enough to bring her so far, her Place here should not be empty. Nay, I believe I may say, that she sometimes went rather beyond her Strength, and, to the Hazard of her Health, ventur'd here on the return of these Days. The stated Language of her Heart, and frequently of her Lips in this Case, was the same with that of the Psalmist, *Lord, I have loved the Habitation of thy House, and the Place where thine Honour*
I 2 dwell-

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dwelleth^a. And as her Desire was after the Word and Ordinances, so the Enjoyment of them was sweet and delightful to her Soul. What an Appetite had she for the Word! How refreshing were all Gospel Truths to her! She *found the Words of God, and did eat them*, and they were to her *the Joy and Rejoycing of her Heart*^b. She could say with David, *How sweet are thy Words unto my Taste, yea, sweeter than Honey to my Mouth*^c.

She was a chearful, humble Christian: pleasant in her Conversation, yet not light; better acquainted with divine Things than many, yet far from being puffed up; the Reason was, because she had not only clear and sound Notions in her Head, but felt the Weight and Influence of them upon her Heart. She had been grappling with Infirmities many Years, such that were enough to try the Graces of the strongest Believer; yet she was enabled to *possess her Soul in Patience*^d, being so far from Murmuring, when the Hand of God was upon her in Sickness; that she always admired his Goodness that she was no worse, considering what her Distempers were, and of how long Continuance.

Charity, or Christian Love, had so much the Ascendant in her Heart, that I never

^a Psa. xx. i. 8.

^b Jer. xv. 16.

^c Psa. cxix. 103.

^d Luke xxi. 19.

found her inclined to give into any evil Surmises of others, never wresting their Words, nor putting their Conduct upon the Rack; but, on the contrary, she was always ready to hope and believe the best; and where their Words or Actions would admit of different Constructions, she would be sure to choose the most favourable.

She was tenderly concerned for the Interest of our Redeemer, grieved at the growing Iniquity of the Day, and the visible Decay of serious and practical Religion. Her Compassion to the Distressed, and Willingness to *do good unto all, especially those of the Household of Faith*^a, were well known; wherein she *put on, as the Elect of God*, not only *Humbleness of Mind*, but also *Bowels of Mercies*, as is express'd, Col. iii. 12. In fine, the whole of her Deportment was managed with the utmost Care and Circumspection; for she was helped to *set the Lord always before her*, that she might *not be moved*^b, and endeavour'd, thro' her whole Course, to maintain *a Conscience void of Offence both toward God and toward Man*^c. It was her great Concern to live as becomes the Gospel of Christ, that she might be an Ensamble to those about her, and a Credit to the Profession she made. More might be said on the Subject, would your Time allow of it, but that being gone, I shall next apply my

^a Gal. vi. 10.

^b Psal. 16. 8.

^c Acts xxiv. 16.

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self to the Relations of the Deceased, as
the present Occasion may require.

As to you, my Brother, who stood in the
nearest Relation to the Deceased: It must
be confessed your Loss is great, the Lord has
removed *with a Stroke the Desire of your
Eyes*^a, the sweet Companion of your Life,
and the kind Partner of your Cares. I hear-
tily condole with you, under the sad Provi-
dence. The many excellent Qualities which
indear'd her to you in Life, as they greatly
aggravate your Loss, cannot but fill you
with deep Concern for her Death. Sorrow
becomes you: not to be affected with the
Loss of such Relatives, would argue a Stu-
pidity not to be pardon'd in Heathens, much
less in those, who profess to be Disciples of
Christ. But tho' you are allow'd to grieve
for the Loss of so valuable a Wife, and one
that for her Age might have been continu'd
much longer with you; yet remember you
are not to sorrow, as those who have no
Hope. Remember that this was her Re-
quest to you, a Request made under the Ap-
prehensions of approaching Death; and 'tis
happy for your self, as well as comfortable
to those about you, that you are enabled in
some measure to pursue it. I hope the Lord
will keep that Exhortation always in your
Mind, which speaketh unto us as unto Chil-

^a Ephes. xxiv. 16.

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dren : *My Son, despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*^a. And that I may assist you in the latter Part of it, give me Leave to refresh your Memory with a few Things, that may serve (if the Lord please) to alleviate your Sorrow.

You will consider in the first place, who has done it, and that *because it is the Lord*, it becomes you not to open your Mouth, by way of Complaint against him. We ought to acknowledge his Sovereignty, and justify the Lord in all his Dealings. You will reflect upon that Goodness, which has spared her so long to you; rather than repine at that Providence, which has now remov'd her. You will remember that your Loss is her unspeakable Gain. You will not grieve that she has got the Start of you, that she is entred into Rest, while you are continu'd in a troublesome World. You indeed have lost her Company; but consider, she has chang'd hers for much better. You will not fail to observe, that she is deliver'd from all those bodily Infirmities which attended her here, which made Life frequently burthensome to her self, and in some measure prevented her Usefulness to you; these she has thrown off, and with them all the Sin and Imperfection which cleave to

^a Heb. xii. 5.

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the Body. Sin shall no more weigh her down, Sorrow on that account no more oppress her. She is released from the Working of Corruption, the Temptations of Satan, and the Pressure of all manner of Afflictions. What Influence should such a Consideration have upon your Mind? Let me further observe to you, that the Lord could easily have laid his Hand much heavier, he could have added to your Trouble many other Ways, so that you will think it your Duty, at the same time that you groan under the present Burthen, to admire the Goodness of God, that he has bound up no more in it. The Affliction indeed is great, yet it is under divine Disposal, and the Lord knows how to bring Good out of Evil, Light out of Darknes, and Life out of Death. The Lord does nothing in vain; when he afflicts his Children there is Need for it, and he has gracious Designs in all his Visitations. This should encourage you to lie at his Feet, to eye his Hand, and study his Pleasure under this Dispensation. Here your principal Desire should be to know the Rod, and him that has appointed it; to understand the Voice of his Providence, that it may have a sanctified Influence upon your Heart and Life; that being better'd by it, you may be brought nearer the Lord, and be made more like him, fitted more for his Service

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Service here, and the Enjoyment of his Presence above.

Shall I now be allow'd to address myself to you, the sorrowful Children of our deceased Friend? There is Reason enough, it must be confess'd, for your Tears; 'tis no wonder you weep, considering what a valuable Mother you have lost. How strong was her Love to you! how tender her Care over you! how much was your Well-being here, but especially your Happiness hereafter, the Matter of her Prayers, and the Subject of her Endeavours. You are Witnesses for her, how much it was her Care, in Conjunction with your Father, not only to form you for this Life, but to fit you for a better; how constantly she studied to bring you up in the Fear and Admonition of the Lord; how passionately she desir'd to see Christ form'd in you, and find early Impressions of Religion upon your Souls; and what Pleasure it gave her to see you *Remember your Creator in the Days of your Youth*^a. The Death of such a Parent justly calls for your Tears, yet is there a Measure which they ought not to exceed. Your Case also admits of Alleviation; for tho' you have lost an affectionate Mother, an indulgent Father is still living; tho' the Lord has seen

^a Eccles. xii. 1.

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fit to remove her now, you can better spare her than if it had been sooner. Think what a Mercy it is, that you had the Instructions and Example of so good a Mother so long; and that you have still a Father, who will not fail to watch over you, and put you in mind of her Ways. I need not suggest what Returns are due from you to him; you have been always practised to your Duty, and I am perswaded, will now think it more your Concern than ever. If the Lord please to sanctify the Affliction to you, that the Death of a Mother may tend to the Life of your Souls; there is no doubt but Grace will constrain you to tread in the Steps of your deceased Parent, and, as she did, to study the Glory of God, and the Comfort of others in every Capacity.

As to other sorrowful Relations, what has been already observ'd, may, in the Hand of the Spirit, be a proper Means to moderate your Grief, and bear you up patiently under this melancholy Providence. The Lord is very often pleas'd to cut off the Streams, that he may keep us closer to himself, the Fountain. And what a gracious Design, what an unspeakable Privilege is this? We are too ready to look to a frail Creature, when our Eyes should be upon a faithful Creator. Think with your selves, your everlasting Friend, your unchangeable Relative,

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lative, still lives ; he is able to make up every Loss, to *supply all your Need according to his Riches in Glory by Christ Jesus* ^a. The Lord has all Comforts in his Hand, and when he removes one, he can easily furnish another. She is gone, but not hers ; other Relatives survive, who will be ready to *every good Word and Work*, and, I doubt not, supply her Place, by discharging the same Offices of Love and Affection.

I would willingly spare your Patience, my Friends, and here put a Period to the Discourse ; but allow me one Word to the Community, to which she stood related in the Bonds of the Gospel : You, my Brethren, are deprived of a valuable Member, one that was an Honour to her Profession, and an useful Hand in her Place. Let not this Stroke be unheeded. If an Addition of such Members is Matter of Joy to the Churches of Christ, the Loss of them loudly demands a Tribute of Sorrow. Dread the Thoughts of coming under that Charge, which God brought against *Israel*, and endeavour to avoid it : *The Righteous perisheth, and no Man layeth it to Heart ; and merciful Men are taken away, none considering that the Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come* ^b. I have already observed, how much her Heart was in this Place, and

^a Phil. iv. 19.

^b Isai. lvii. 1.

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how willingly she broke through all Difficulties to attend the Worship of God in it. Will not each of you think her, in this Respect, an Example worthy Imitation? Shall not her Practice excite each Member of the Society to fill up their Places with equal Constancy? Yes certainly, if animated with the same Love to the Lord, and the same Zeal to his Ways, as she was; and if her Design in choosing these Words for a Funeral Discourse be happily answer'd. For what can we think she intended by putting her last Expressions, her dying Words, into such a Prayer as this: *The Lord comfort your Hearts, and stablish you in every good Word and Work*: but that she might thereby awaken you into a Sense of Duty, with respect to your Attachment to the Doctrines of the Gospel, and your Attendance on the Word and Ordinances? This is the principal Thing designed by our Apostle in his Prayer for the *Thessalonians*, and, as it comes from the Lips of our dying Friend, is as if she should say: "I cannot but be affected
 "for the Interest of Christ in general, but
 "more especially for those, with whom
 "I am in Communion; and as I see Error
 "creep in upon the Church, and *Iniquity*
 "*abound* in the World; as I observe the
 "Doctrines of the Gospel too much tram-
 "pled under Foot, and the Ordinance, of
 God's

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“ God’s House (as well as the other Duties of Religion) too much neglected ;
“ I fear, least the Infection should take a
“ larger spread, and corrupt those to whom
“ I am related in the Fellowship of the
“ Gospel. Wherefore *my Heart’s Desire and*
“ *Prayer to God for them is*^a, That he
“ would keep them faithful to the *Truth*,
“ *as it is in Jesus*^b, stanch to the Doctrines
“ of the Gospel ; and not only so, but that
“ they make Conscience of every Christian
“ Duty to themselves, their Fellow Creatures, and to the Lord : especially, that
“ they *forsake not the assembling themselves*
“ *together, as the manner of* too many
“ *now is*^c ; but keep close in their Attendance upon the Lord, the preaching of his
“ Word, and the dispensing of the Ordinances, as the best Means to promote their
“ Comfort, settle their Peace, and confirm
“ their Joy in believing.” I leave this her dying Request (as we may call it) with you, and shall not fail to follow it with my Prayers to the Throne of Grace, that it may have its desired Weight upon your Hearts.

A Word in general, and I have done. The Death of our departed Friend is another *Memento* to all of us : The Language it speaks is, *Dust you are, and unto Dust*

^a Rom. x. 1.

^b Eph. iv. 21.

^c Heb. x. 25.

you

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*you shall return^a: Be ye therefore also ready^b. Oh, how fleeting is Life! how certain is Death! yet how uncertain the Hour and Time of it! What then should be our Care in this fluctuating Condition? Certainly that, while favour'd with Health and Opportunity, whatever our Hand findeth to do, we should do it with all our Might, remembering that there is no Work, nor Device, nor Wisdom, nor Knowledge, in the Grave, whither we are hastening^c. This is the Time for Action; here are the Opportunities of discovering our Love to Christ, and his Interest; after Death it will be too late. And as we are sure that will come upon us, and know not how soon; how much does it concern us to consider what Bottom we are upon? what we have to bear us up in that difficult Hour? Upon this Account, it would not be improper to put such Questions as these to our selves: Have we any Views of an Interest in Christ? Can we call him *our Lord Jesus Christ*? Do we know any thing of God's Relation to us, as *our Father*? Have we any Discovery of his Love, in those two Fruits of it, *everlasting Consolation, and good Hope*? If so, our Condition is happy; we may meet Death with Courage, and look into Eternity with Pleasure. But if, instead of this, we are build-*

^a Gen. iii. 19.

^b Matt. xxiv. 44.

^c Eccl. ix. 10.

ing our Hopes, and raising our Expectations upon other Things, any thing that we are, or that we can do; if we are destitute of Property in Christ, if we are *without God, and without Hope in the World*^a; (as all natural Men are) if, instead of depending on Christ and his Righteousness for Salvation, we are saying to *the Works of our own Hands*, ye are *our Gods*^b; it looks dark upon us, and cannot but be melancholy with us when we come to die, whether we are awakened into a Sense of our State before Death, or only upon it. If before Death, how terrible must it be, to look into that Place of Horror and Anguish, of Darkness and Despair, in which Death is presently to lodge us! But, if we should remain secure in Death, and go off without any Terror of Conscience, oh, how dreadful will it be to have the first Sight of our Misery by the Light of Hell-fire! not to open our Eyes upon our Sins, till we lift them up with *the rich Man*^c in the Lake, that burns for ever and ever! May the Lord impress these Things upon our Minds, and improve them to our present and eternal Advantage.

^a Eph. ii. 12.

^b Hos. xiv. 3.

^c Luke xvi. 23.

THE END.

ing our Hopes, and raising our Expectations upon other Things, any thing that we are or that we can do; if we are destitute of Property in Christ, if we are without God, and without Hope in the World; (as all natural Men are) it is indeed of deplorable consequence, we are saying to the Works of our own Hands, ye are our Gods; it looks dark upon us, and cannot but be melancholy with us when we come to die, whether we are awakened into a sense of our state before Death, or only upon it. If before Death, how terrible must it be to look in to that Place of Horror and Anguish, of Darkness and Despair, in which Death is presently to lodge us! But if we should remain secure in Death, and go off without any Terror of Conscience, oh, how dreadful will it be to have the first sight of our misery by the opening of our eyes, till we lift them up with astonishment in the Lake, that burns for ever! May the Lord imprint these Things upon our Minds, and improve them to our present and eternal Advantage.



